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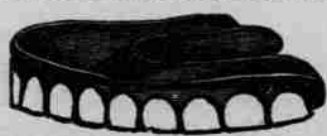
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## THE HOUSES OF MEXICO.

Solidly Built of Brick or Adobes and But Little Wood Is Used in Any of Them.

There is a minimum of wood used for house construction in the cities of Mexico, and there is absolutely nothing to burn except what furnishings the houses may contain, says Arboriculture. The walls are solidly built of stone and brick, or, in the less costly structures, of adobes, which are thickly plastered inside and out with mortar or stucco. The floors are of brick, stone or tiles, while the roofs are of brick, laid in mortar, or, in some cities, of semi-cylindrical clay tiles. Many roofs are ached with brick, laid flat, not on edge, and it is marvelous how slight a curve is given some of these arches. Yet they support heavy weights and have lasted through centuries.

Flat roof are supported by 6x6-inch hewn pine joists, placed eight inches apart. These joists are often 20 feet in length. The doors are heavy, hanging upon ornamented wrought strap hinges, and secured by strong, hand-made locks, which have remarkably large, complicated keys. Practically the only wood used in construction are the doors and joists which support the roof. The church roofs are invariably of brick arches, usually several arches in each. There are no such fire traps in Mexico as those mansard roofs of French and American cities, or the frail dwellings of China, or the universal wooden structures which have made fire insurance so great a burden in the United States, and which cause so great and continuous expenditures for fire protection.

## RATTLERS DONE IN STONE.

Venomous Reptiles Clearly Outlined in Tracery on Indianapolis Federal Building.

One of the plinths in the north front of the new federal building promises ill for the peace of mind of the inveterate toper, for on its surface in a delicate tracery is apparently the outline of many rattlesnakes, says the Indianapolis News. An old stone man from the Bedford quarries called attention to the freak several days ago and said that such markings were very unusual.

According to his story these snakes existed many years ago, in prehistoric times, back in the era when the plots for fairy stories were laid. Possibly these snakes were cold, according to his story, anyway they coiled closely to one another and in that form were petrified and were gradually turned into stone. The stone expert also pointed out where the rattles of the snake may be seen plainly.

One of the most peculiar features of the stone is the fact that the tracery shows most plainly during damp weather, and if it were on the south side of the building, it is said, the sun would soon bleach its delicate tracery until it would be no longer discernible. On account of its present situation the sun seldom reaches it, but when it does the outlines of the snakes completely disappear.

## WORKS LIKE A MACHINE.

Mechanical Execution of the Telegraph Operator Illustrated by an Edison Tale.

Thomas A. Edison believes there is no worker as mechanical as the telegraph operator. In an argument over this point with a couple of friends the other day he told the following story, says the New York Times.

"One night, when I was a 'cub' operator in Cincinnati, I noticed an immense crowd gathering in the street outside a newspaper office. I called the attention of the other operators to the crowd, and we sent a messenger boy out to find the cause of the excitement. He returned in a few minutes and shouted out: 'Lincoln's shot!'

"Instantly the operators looked from one face to the other to see which man had received the news. All their faces were blank, and every man said he had not taken a word about the shooting.

"Look over your file," said the boss to the man handling press stuff.

"For a few moments we waited in suspense, and then the man held up a sheet of paper containing a short account of the attack on the president. The operator had worked so mechanically that he had handled the news without the slightest knowledge of its significance."

**Hot Springs "Blowed Out."**  
The Cimarron salt fields in Indian territory boast of a large hot spring, which forms a pool about 20 by 60 feet. A story of this spring is told by cattle men who camp near by. One night last summer a thunderstorm was raging over the plain, when a bolt of lightning descended. Instantly a great volume of flame shot up a thousand feet into the sky from the spring, and continued to blaze for 20 minutes. The cowboy claims that the hot springs "blowed out" and that the location changed several rods.

**Photograph and Birds.**  
A perfect photographic record of the exquisite song of the brown thrush was produced before the American Ornithologists' union by Prof. S. D. Judd. With equal success Dr. Judd has been experimenting with other birds, and his achievements are attracting attention in the scientific world. The educational possibilities of the undertaking are generally conceded. Nature study in schools is just now receiving more attention.

**Cautious Alkali.**  
The electrolytic production of caustic alkalis and chlorine has proved of the greatest importance to the world of trade. The chlorine produced is used for making bleaching powders which, in turn, has revolutionized the bleaching trade here and abroad.

## BIRTHDAYS IN JAPAN.

Unusual Thing About Them Is Every Boy Is Supposed to Be Born on March 3.

With the exception of the emperor there are no individual birthdays in delightfully interesting Japan. The people, however, make up for this neglect by having a sort of general birthday of everybody in common, which is celebrated with great rejoicing.

There are two of these general holidays, one for each sex. The male birthday, which is known as the "celebration of the boys," occurs on the third day of the third month and the fifth day of the fifth month. These days are generally put aside and boys and girls respectively receive presents according to their station.

The birthday of the emperor, or Ten-o, as he is more properly styled, is also a general holiday for the Japanese everywhere. The houses are all decorated with flags, and in the evening the streets are gay with the lights of innumerable colored lanterns. In the morning the highest authorities go to the palace and offer their congratulations in person and the lower degrees offer them vicariously to their superiors. All the Japanese would, somehow or other, congratulate their monarch on having added another year to his age.

## WHERE BIG FISH ABOUND.

Island Off the Texas Coast That Is Very Alluring to Lovers of Angling.

Lying broadside of the Texas coast, and along the northwestern gulf line, is St. Joseph Island. It is a spot to which nature lures the fisherman on idle, dreamy summer days, when sunshine, eternal golden sunshine, is everywhere, says the Four-Track News.

On one side the channel, as peaceful shadows drift, casting lights of purple and pink and blue; on the other, the dashing, restless gulf, twinkling and sparkling as though myriads of stars were playing hide and seek among its white caps.

If it is early in the morning, the pass is dotted with many small boats, and little fish are gamboling among the waves, while porpoises sail by with independent indifference. Great flocks of swift-winged sea birds skim the waters, while storks, and cranes, and the pink-plumaged flamingo, with great numbers of smaller waders, are eagerly devouring their morning meal nearer the shore. The scene is full of wild, free life, together with the bracing air and the pleasant odor from the salt marshes.

## BOOKLESS AGE PREDICTED.

Chicago University Professor Says Talking Machines Will in Time Displace Books.

According to Prof. H. Meillon, a bookless age is in store for the future. In time, he predicts, libraries will consist of talking disks and book printing will be a lost art, reports the Chicago Post.

Prof. Marion is an advocate, with Profs. Scripture, of Yale; Cusachs, of Annapolis, and De Sumichrast, of Harvard, of the advanced "talking-machine" method of teaching the languages. It was at Cobb hall, during a demonstration of this method, which has been successfully tested at the naval academy, that the speaker outlined the larger scope of the invention.

"In time," he declared, "these disks will take the place of text-books. Paper-backed novels will disappear, and instead of reading printed books the literateur will only have to put a disk in his talking machine and have the novel read to him in the living voice of its creator."

## SEX THAT EATS PICKLES.

Women in Restaurants Consume Twice as Many of Them as Men Do.

"I always thought," said a waiter, according to the Chicago Chronicle, "that the stories about women being such great pickle eaters were just jokes told by people who thought they were funny; but one of my first experiences as a waiter taught me in a very simple manner that the stories were true."

"This was in a restaurant where we had many women customers, one side of the restaurant being for men, and the other side for women. On the women's side we used to have to fill up the pickle jars that stood on the tables every day, while the jars on the men's side had to be filled only once in two days."

"So here, you see, the women regularly ate about twice as many pickles as the men did; and I should say that that is just about what they always do, everywhere."

## Planet Mars Inhabited.

A recent dispatch from Prof. Percival Lowell from Flagstaff, Ariz., stating that a large projection of Mars has been discovered, leads Prof. Garrett P. Serviss to declare that the planet is undoubtedly inhabited. On the other hand, Prof. Flammarion, of Paris, declares that the projection is only an illumination of the clouds of lofty mountain summits in the setting sun, and that many other analogous observations have already been made.

## Emergency Aid in Mills.

Nearly all of the metal working plants in Pittsburgh and vicinity are admirably equipped with a hospital annex for cases that require speedy and prompt attention. The distance of hospitals from some of the works renders it possible that an injured man is liable to expire from exhaustion before he is admitted to the institution. To obviate this the owners have fitted up a room or building where injured and sick employees can be treated at once.

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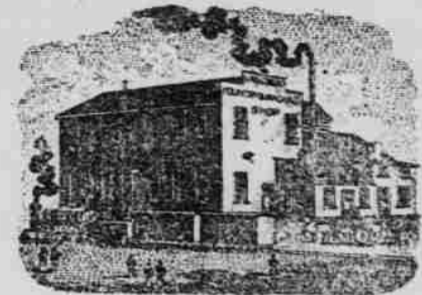
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